

And now... Who can help me?

By Victor Bejar

Barely a month ago we were coming back from a weekend where my firm hired some trainers to give us a “Work Teams Integration” course. It was a unique experience. After months, what I am saying, years of not working out at all, we were taken to a place where very organized and amusing, we were taking into a zip-line, we climbed a straight wall, we were hanging 30 feet high – well protected, I must say – but for me, who suffer from height dizzy, I even got really dizzy. We invented cheers for our team, we competed with other teams in ski races... anyway. It was the first day where I ended up with muscle pain in muscles I didn't even know I had. At night, a trainer and the firm director made us a presentation about the firm: Mission, Vision and Values, and they made emphasis in the importance of Firm Values, especially loyalty, and they gave us really cool T-shirts with the Firm's logo in the front and a list of the organization values, making emphasis for loyalty with bigger letters.

Than night I went to bed very tired, but very happy also to belong not to an organization, but to a big family, where we all were one. I dreamed about a large T-shirt wrapping us all and all of us melting and becoming one.

Very early next day we took breakfast enjoying the fresh air from the place and then we went into the country to continue the activities that had for porpoise to make from us one great team, a team able to defeat the competition, the same competition we sometimes crossed by in the street and as little children, we stick our tongue's out.

Market is divided among five firms, three competitors that even together made no more than 25% and the rest divided among us and our main competitor. The dynamics had the purpose to awaken our innovation to attend our customers so we had a Rally where the questions to move on were oriented to the knowledge of our products, innovational proposals to attend clients and at the end, the group picture, all uniformed with our cool T-shirts, sport pants that also the firm gave us and a big pennant with the firm's logo that said ***"United with loyalty, no one will defeat us"***. I felt, with all due respect, like saluting the Flag in the Independence Day and hear the National Anthem. The following Monday we greet each other when we met, and even people we didn't talk to, smile at us with a warm "Good morning". We were a big family and the proud to belong to it was on the edge. Friday that very same week was special, because we had unexpected visitors. That morning we were told that we should polish everything up because we were having important visitors. So a men-in-black retinue came and all of them were very interested and asking about our processes. They stood for about two hours and then they left.

The following week we were asked from Head Office for unusual reports related to productivity and the Monday two week after the great experience at the country we had an assembly at the central yard of the factory. At the presidium I recognized some of the last week visitors. The Head Master announced, with no previous words, that the competition, the very same competition we had a big fight with, have made a buy offer to the owners and they have accepted, so by the next week, starting the following month, the new owners will take possession of the installations. The Head Master also told us he was going to retire and that he wished us big success in the new firm.

That news were a complete shock. Our previous enemies where now the owners of the firm. That night I dreamed about the former Head Master, taking out my firm's T-shirt every time I wore it, painting the new firm's logo in it with spray just like a hooligan and giving it back to me, and I refused to wear it. I took out a new T-shirt and it started all over again. Every time the former Head Master do that he mumbled the same word: naïve. I was crying in anger and he laughed at me. Naïve, he repeated over and over. What about Loyalty? I asked, and he answer with irony: If you want loyalty, by yourself a dog. And for fidelity, I recommend you a nice sound equipment. I woke up sweating and slapping.

The new owners made a positions analysis, developing level and I felt confident right after swallowing the bitter pill of resignation. My notes were always as high as they can be. Nevertheless, a Friday – always on Friday – I was call to Human Resources and without any further explanation, they gave me a check for my severance pay. Why? I asked. Does my substitute have more and better competences than I do? After that I realized that my replacement was a relative of the new owners.

That weekend I cried in anger for felling cheated, and for being so naïve. What did I do wrong? Where was my mistake? And now... Who can help me?

My gratitude to Roberto Gómez Bolaños for making, not in porpoise, that jewel of good speaking phrase that his character, the Red Grasshopper (El Chapulín Colorado) made so famous: And now... Who can help me?

Provocative questions:

1. Which should be the firm-employee relationship?
2. What is the meaning of “to wave the company flag”?
3. Is there a thing such as “a lifetime compromise”?
4. Should people be disloyal to the firm they work for?
5. What should be the new model of firm-employee relationship?
6. Which is the role of labor unions?
7. Are there legal equality among employer-employee?